

# PowWow #22

**PowWow #22** is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, August 5, 1995. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Twenty-Two, and we're undertaking a most ambitious subject with Ramifications of Ghod and Eviel. There's just no telling how serious and meaningful we can all become, as we struggle to recall the greatest example of each type that our lives have encountered, in narrations of

## Heroes & Villains

### *Going Into The West , Part 5*

In the great circle of life, it now seems inevitable that Arnie and I would move to Nevada.

Well, perhaps a little less inevitable for a Brooklyn Boy whose feet had never been off concrete (so I exaggerate a little, you get the point.) But tying up with me and my karma meant the wide open spaces were just over the hill from our Livingston Street view of the Statue of Liberty.

Not that Arnie knew that when he married me. I was in my CitySlicker phase back then, and had left any western lore I ever had behind me in Missouri.

But, blood will out. When I was a kid, we railroaded all over the west, saw the trails, watched all the western movies, and read the settler-family books. My whole family was favorably inclined to western things. We often assured each other that people were friendlier in the west, as compared to easterners who were known to be cold and inhospitable. For this reason, we always traveled west, and never visited any spot more eastern than Kentucky.

At some point in the early 70's, my interest in western history started to resurface. It was probably sparked by the gift of a Russell art calendar. Whether it was that or something else, I gradually drifted back to admiring the west.

About this time, I got a professional reason to pursue my renewed interest (or perhaps it was the other way around.) Katz Kunkel Worley got a contract to design some games for Tynesoft, an English software company. The second in our

string was "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show & Rodeo".

I did the backgrounder stuff for the design: extensive research in just exactly how to rope a calf or ride a bronco or barrel race. Saddles and lariats and types of brands and posthole diggers and styles of barbed wire.... you get started down this road, and it's amazing the dusty tracks you'll stumble into.

Well, I pretty much steeped myself in rodeo lore, then started down the back alleys of cattle ranching. And, I was reading a little Indian history, and getting the tribes straight in my mind again.

It was about that time I was given My Mission.

Now, some people go all their lives, and they never really get assigned A Great Quest. They peacefully watch the telly and read the news, and never hear The Call.

Mine came the last night of a January Consumer Electronic Show. We sat in the room with Ken Williams, President of Sierra On-Line, and he said, "Would you like to do a game for Sierra?" No body says no to such a question. So, thinking fast, I popped up with, "I'd like to do a game about the Western Migration, an Oregon Trail adventure."

Ken allowed as how that seemed like an interesting idea.

"I'll need to do a little basic research," I explained to Arnie and Bill after that meeting, "to make sure I get the facts right." And they said, "Buy anything you need."

It was like turning me loose in a candy store, with carte blanche to acquire everything that looked good to me. I

already had a basic western history collection; it quickly advanced to a good collection of western books. Then I got sources for more arcane knowledge: the trailbooks, songbooks, cookbooks. The diaries, the photograph albums.

And, there were other places to go for research; every state's tourist board from Independence to Oregon City got a call from me; most came up with rare and unusual material about their state's history and geography. Utah was particularly helpful, with pages and pages of photocopied diaries, photographs, maps.

When I needed more information about oxen, I went to Purina. They had one man (only one in the country) who could tell me the weight, and daily consumption of a healthy ox, and how long it would take an ox to die of starvation, and how many pounds of meat that starved ox would produce. Now there are two of us who know.

I hugged a stuffed buffalo and examined an authentic prairie schooner in Salt Lake City. I studied the wheeltracks cut into the road in Wyoming. I sent away for photographs of the Snake River, with its four places to ford.

I learned the name of every tribe between Missouri and the West Coast, and just exactly what they were doing in 1850. I traced the route of every famous wagon train leader, Indian scout, and mountain trapper that year, to figure where their paths may have crossed and where each might have been seen on which date by the mythical traveler in the game.

Birds, flowers, trees and wildlife were next; I had to know every creature and

thing the pioneer would see.

Sitting in Brooklyn Heights, I became the eastern-most expert on The Wild West of 1850.

The game itself took some interesting trails. After creating the route to Oregon, we decided to extend it to California as well. I ran the pioneers through Truckee, and wept over the agonies these historical heroes experienced in the mountains. We like to think of them as Men of Iron and Women of Steel. But they were, sadly, frail as thee and me, just forced by their awful circumstances into acts of ferocious heroism. I marvelled at the men, and I cried over the women who carried their children on their backs as they walked barefoot through the mountain snows.

The game passed through several publisher's hands. Sierra gave me back the game (and let me keep the money) and I resold it to an Ohio company who wanted to produce it for the school market. They acquired a Smithsonian sanction for it and for me---for about two weeks I was the official "Miss Smithsonian Software". Then that company went under, lost the Smithsonian license, and I got the game back to resell.

The last company I sold it to wanted something different: "Give me a game I can sell to schools that I can do using lots of New Mexico scenery as background." So I scrapped the Oregon Trail project, and started researching the Santa Fe Trail. An altogether different experience for the traveler, and a whole new set of terrain and Indians and wildlife and flora ....

So I researched that side of history to a fair thee well. This time I knew the routine, and was a lot more efficient about it. But it was still a major undertaking...and my history library developed a southwestern accent.

About that time, my publisher started marketing a piece of hardware: a gun to fire at the computer monitor for target-style games. So, I got a new directive: "Change the game so there'll be a lot more shooting. The educational stuff will still be embedded, but now the gamer can shoot more people and animals."

I objected somewhat to all the buffalo and Indian shooting. I didn't win, exactly, but I was allowed to build in a sort of karmic retribution that came from being

too much of a free-shooter.

So, I did it all again...this time I read up on various models of guns and their loading times, the weight and cost of ammunition for each in 1850. And, the violence level of all the tribes between Missouri and Santa Fe, so we could build in their responses to all the shooting.

I joined the Santa Fe Trail Association (I'm still a member to this day) and got good at naming the dry river beds of Western Texas.

By this point, I'd been going into the west for ten years or more. I was not only trail wise about The Oregon, The California, and The Santa Fe Trails, I was looking toward other roads. So the publisher got a notion: "How about we fix it so we could sell add-on disks of other trails, so the traveler could choose other routes, other destinations."

That got me started on some of the other major arteries through the Southwest. I started slowly building up the information I'd eventually need for The Mormon, The Bozeman, and The Gila Trails. Looking toward future projects, I also went back a bit in time and started making notes on how to recreate Lewis & Clarke's exploration.

I was getting pretty trail-worn by this time. I started talking like Gary Cooper, bought a square-dance dress, and started wearing boots most of the time. I got some really good turquoise, and a leather fringed jacket.

But the epic of the game isn't over, and My Mission isn't yet complete.

The publisher recently brought his wife into the business. She decided what they really should do is start a line of games for teenaged girls. She wants to redo the game as an orphan teen taking her syblings into the west and having a quasi-lesbian friendship with the girl in the next wagon. And, oh, by the way, not so much shooting please, but more gingham.

The role of the game designer has just as much importance in the scheme of things as the role of script writer for the movies.

But don't think my western odyssey is finished. I own so many western history books at this point that it is absolutely necessary for me to find a way to resell my

accumulated knowledge. It's only a matter of time til I peddle all this arcane lore to someone else.

Now that I'm in Nevada, I look everyday at the mountains, and wonder at the barrier they represented to the pioneers who passed this way. I study the desert, and mentally tally the edible fodder for the stock. I read the diaries of these heroes, and marvel at their tenacity.

When I go to the airport, I always look at the statue of the bronco buster that welcomes visitors. When the rodeo comes to town, I break out my western shirts. Often, when I drive along the Las Vegas streets, I play cowboy songs on my car radio.

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't the lure of cowboys and indians that made us turn our eyes to the west, when Arnie and I decided to make our move.

And, I'm not going to tell you that I'm some kind of Annie Oakley/Calamity Jane/Dale Evans cowgirl. I'm allergic to horses, and avoid actually walking on dusty trails.

But my move into the west was probably preordained. The neon and sequins were only part of it.

### All The Fan World Loves A Hero

I could never start any discussion of my fan heroes without mentioning Lee Hoffman in the first sentence. It was her light and easy wit that made me want to be a fan, her and Walt Willis and Bob Tucker and Bob Bloch and Shelby Vick. But especially Lee.

Lee proved that a woman could be just as good a fan, and produce just as good a fanzine as any man. When she started *Quandry*, it probably wasn't really her intention to hide her sex. She just didn't mention it. Then, as time passed, she just never corrected the people who assumed she was a guy. Oh, there was that birthday card she sent to Willis; hindsight makes some fans see the hint that no one picked up on at the time. But, the fact is, she had won her laurels as a good faned before she showed up at the New Orleans worldcon.

Lee is definitely my number one role model.

But, as I start counting down my fan heroes, I realize that I have a lot of them.

I salute Forry Ackerman for starting



fandom, and Roy Palmer for the first fanzine. I salute Bob Tucker for a lifetime of fan accomplishment, and especially for establishing wit, humor and insurgentism as the fannish coin.

And ShelVY for a lifetime of high standards and generosity. And Rotsler, and Burbee, and Laney, and....

I salute Ted White for how much he promotes the highest standards, and for how much he loves fandom and its history.

I salute Ray Nelson for inventing the propellor beanie as our cartooned emblem.

This article could get as long as my mailing list, as long as a fan history book. But, you get my drift. Fandom is just full of people who have done their heroic best.

Not just fandom at large, either, but home-town local fandom. I salute Ken & Aileen for nurturing this desert crew; without them, we'd not be gathered today. I salute Ben & Cathi for having the heart to choose Burbee, and Corflu for their wedding. I salute Tom for the way he grasps fandom; he was truly touched by the Spirit of Trufandom. ("Takes one to know one," Arnie said to me when I expressed this opinion.)

I salute Arnie. Truly my hero among heroes. For always helping, for always encouraging, for always holding the torch of trufandom against all forces.

...Do you begin to get my drift? Fandom is made up of people who are giants in my eyes.

That's why it's so hard when any fan is exposed in other than heroic light.

I wrote before, of the genre of heroes: "We like to think of them as Men of Iron and Women of Steel. But they were, sadly, frail as thee and me, just forced by their awful circumstances into acts of ferocious heroism."

Fan heroes may be forced to their acts by a different style of Awful Circumstances, but it comes to the same. They get the badge of heroism pinned to their chest by such worshippers as me because they did what they did, or do what they do, out of devotion to fannish goals.

Ben said, in a recent lettercol, something quite profound. Something to the order of, "I'm not the first to discover there's a difference between the person and what he writes."

That's how it is with heroes. Often

they don't stand too much examination, beyond the specific act that wins them their badges of admiration.

I remember well the first time it happened to me. I adored a certain fan and hung on every word written or spoken. I considered this fan a paragon. Later, when I got a glimpse of his feet, it fairly well shattered me.

But after it was all over, when I was able to explore my feelings, I surprised myself: I liked the fan just as well as before, for the same reasons I liked him at first. His accomplishments were still the same, whether or not he had other faults.

That experience helped me. Before, I would have said, "I could never call any man a hero who did thus-and-so." After, I realized that a weak person may rise and shine at times. And the tragedy of weakness does not darken the brightness.

And so I can look around my friends, and scan my mailing list, and think of the world of fans, and I can name many heroes and why I love them, without turning my head away in sorrow at their failings.

I salute Harry Warner for always sending a letter.

I salute Robert Lichtman for his love of fan history.

I salute Don Fitch for his hospitality.

I salute Chuch for his wicked wit.

I salute Redd for his unfailing wisdom and logic.

I salute rich for his passion.

I salute.....

I salute.....

--Joyce Katz